



YOUTH MISSION TEAM AUSTRALIA
Current as at 16/08/2016

YMT Child Protection

Code of Conduct

Duty of Care

YMT members have a 'duty of care' for the young people they are working with. Stated simply, 'duty of care' means that we must take reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all young people in our care.

Across the range of YMT ministry in school retreats, weekend camps, youth group and even social activities involving young people, YMT members must be committed to assessing any potential risks associated with the circumstances or activities that they may be inviting young people to participate in.

Duty of care also extends to the need to model safe and responsible behaviour. This means we should avoid activities while in the presence of young people that would be potentially Hazardous for a younger person.

Issues of sensitivity

Part of our duty of care to young people also relates to the raising of issues of a sensitive nature. Responsible ministry involves encouraging young people to explore only past experiences which would be appropriate for the context of that ministry.

For example, in no ministry context is it ever appropriate for a team member to initiate discussion or sharing, such as via a testimony or in leading a small group, about the issue of sexual abuse.

The reason for this is that if a young person present has been sexually abused, broaching this subject can open up a potentially overwhelming area of their past or present life, which is likely to require professional help. Most YMT members and



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teachers are not equipped with the professional resources to assist a young person process these experiences effectively.

Another issue of sensitivity which YMT members should not initiate discussion or sharing about is the issue of suicide or the death of a close friend or relative unless there has been sufficient opportunity to consult your Team Manager and, in the case of schools, the REC.

Similar to the first issue, raising these issues for some students may be overwhelmingly relevant. The Team Manager or REC may have information about the young people that may influence whether or not that subject should be addressed or which may influence the way in which that subject is spoken about.

‘Sensitive topics’ summary:

Never explicitly initiated by YMT: Sexual Abuse, physical abuse or suicide

Care needs to be exercised in referring to the following experiences: Loss of loved ones and/or friends, emotional abuse, self-destructive behaviours including substance abuse and eating disorders.

NB. Only share those areas of your journey that you are fully reconciled with yourself.

Mandatory Reporting

In most states of Australia, YMT members are bound by the legislation of ‘Mandatory Reporting’ in relation to issues of child protection.

This means that if we have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been previously or is currently at risk of sexual, physical or emotional abuse we are required, by law, to report this to the official child protection agency.



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As a result, if a student discloses to you information that leads you to believe that they are at risk, then you must inform your Team Manager or Ministry Coordinator immediately.

The same applies if a young person discloses to you that they have recently considered, or are currently considering, some form of self-harm (this includes cutting and thoughts of suicide) – you must inform your Team Manager or Ministry Coordinator immediately.

Because we are asking this of you, never promise “not to tell anyone”. If a student confides that there is something they want to share with you but wants you to promise not to tell anyone, reassure them of your concern and your commitment to help them in whatever way you can but do not promise not to tell anyone.

Professional boundaries

NSW legislation now defines ‘reportable sexual misconduct’ as including the “crossing of professional boundaries”. This is defined as behavior by an adult (that’s you) toward a child or young person (*anyone* under the age of 18 years) that is “inappropriate and overly personal or intimate”. In other words, if you express or demonstrate romantic or intimate feelings for a school student or someone under the age of 18 years, this not only constitutes a breach of YMT single vision, but more importantly, may be deemed as sexual misconduct and therefore would be reportable to the relevant authority.

This type of behaviour would be considered a breach of your professional boundaries, regardless of whether or not your feelings are expressed electronically (e.g. text, snap-chat, email, via social media, etc.) or verbally by phone or, verbally or physically in person.



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In light of this legislation, it is essential that you share immediately with your Pastoral Mentor (Discipler) and your Team Manager if you find yourself having romantic feelings for a YD or young person.

In a similar way, if a YD or other young person communicates a romantic interest in you, it is essential that you share this immediately with your Team Manager, whether or not the feelings are mutual. In practical terms, if a young person flirts with you on more than one occasion, you need to let your Team Manager know.

It also applies that if a YD or young person discloses to you that they have romantic feelings for another adult member of your team, you must report this to your Team Manager immediately.

Practical tips for handling a Disclosure Situation

How to respond:

- maintain eye contact with the student
- show you are concerned and ready to listen
- avoid labelling the student's feelings
- relate your impressions and give the child ample time to respond
- be comfortable with silence and avoid badgering the student with questions
- avoid a display of shock or disgust or personal distress
- address the student's feeling of guilt and assure the child that you believe him/her
- let the student know in a sensitive manner what you plan to do and that you'll try to protect him/her
- ascertain the child's immediate need for safety
- if you have reasonable grounds to suspect the young person has been or is at risk, do not ask too many questions as this can contaminate the evidence should an official investigation be required



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- notify the Team Manager or Ministry Coordinator

Things you can say:

- I believe you
- It wasn't your fault
- I'm glad you felt you could tell me
- I'm sorry it happened to you
- You have the right to be safe

Additional Code of Conduct Guidelines

1. YMT household bedrooms are off limits to young people (under 18 yrs).
2. YD's/students are not permitted to stay overnight in YMT households. The only exception to this would be in the event of exceptional circumstances or in an emergency. In this situation permission must be sought from the parent(s) and your Team Manager.
3. When praying with a student or YD, always arrange to have another team member present to pray with you. If the young person is of the opposite gender, always invite a team member of the same gender as the young person to join you.
4. Avoid long, in-depth individual conversations with students/YD's of the opposite gender. This can be difficult, but respectfully look for opportunities to suggest inviting another team member, of the same gender as the student, to join you if the conversation heads in a deep & meaningful direction.
5. If a student/YD does ask to speak with you privately, do so where other people can see you or would at least have the opportunity to see you (i.e. never behind a closed door or in an out-of-the-way-place).



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Reporting responsibilities for YMT Leaders

1. If, during the course of a school retreat, the Team Manager is informed by a team member that a student is considering, or has recently considered, doing themselves harm or they have grounds to suspect the child is at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, the Team Manager must:

- Immediately inform the REC or key teacher
- Inform the National Director as soon as is practicable
- Complete a YMT Child Protection Incident Report form and forward to the National Director

2. If information such as referred to in point 1 above is shared with the Team Manager or Ministry Coordinator during or through association with any non-school YMT ministry event such as an iSTAND Night or Weekend, the Team Manager must:

- Immediately consult with the National Director to determine the most appropriate course of action.

3. Having received a report from a Team Manager, the National Director will assist the Manager to determine the most appropriate form of action. Determining the most appropriate action may require wider consultation with Community/YMT leadership and official child protection agencies.